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ABSTRACT

A review of the status of English language instruction in Israel begins with an overview of the role of English in the society in general, and outlines the status of English use and instruction in the educational system at all levels (elementary, secondary, higher, adult, and teacher), the activities of related professional associations, the characteristics and training of English language instructors, the type and availability of instructional materials, educational administration and planning in relation to English teaching, English outside the educational system, British and other international support, commercial opportunities related to English instruction, creative writing, language research, and other sources of information. Current syllabi, materials, methodology, and testing for English language instruction in Israel are stable, but the resources to sustain them are not, despite a probable increase in the need for English language skills in the population. Greater need for private funding is foreseen. (MSE)

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English Teaching Profile

Israel

June 1987

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1 Role and status of English

When the State of Israel was established in 1948 the standard of English among the Jewish population was high. English had been the principal medium for conducting the affairs of government and was a compulsory subject in all schools. With the introduction of Hebrew as the official language, together with a flood of new immigrants, there was a rapid change in the use of English. Many of the new immigrants spoke only their mother-tongue of French, Yiddish, Ladino or Judaeo-Arabic dialects, and the proportion of qualified English teachers amongst these immigrants was unequal to the demands of sustaining the high standard and wide use of English. There has, however, always been government and public awareness of the continuing importance of English and the teaching of English has without exception been a major concern of the State's education policy. A later influx of immigrants from English-speaking countries has raised the awareness of English and contributed key members of the English teaching profession. For a country the size and status of Israel, the maintenance of contacts with the Western World through English is vital; with an increasing political and economic orientation forward and alignment with the United States this link has become more and more important.

While, with the exception of two international schools and certain research institutions, English is not a medium of instruction, it is a compulsory and important subject on the school curriculum. It is an essential requirement for all studies at tertiary level where nearly all bibliographies and reference material and most texts are in English. Any Israeli academic, businessperson, government official or indeed politician who is monolingual in either Hebrew or Arabic would feel isolated and considerably disadvantaged. There is considerable exchange within all the professions, and in public life in general English is the medium of expression for that exchange between Israel, Europe and the United States.

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In some ways English is used now as an unofficial second language for the middle classes for the reasons adduced above and because street names and public signs are in Hebrew, Arabic and English; there is increasing tourism from English-speaking countries, and films and TV programmes in English are ubiquitous and popular. A small but influential minority, immigrants from the United States, Britain, Australia, Canada and South Africa, will still use English within their community and consequently some Israeli writers do write in English. Israel also sustains an English language newspaper of quite high quality, the Jersualem Post, with a daily circulation of approximately fifty thousand.

2 English within the education system

The main aim of teaching English language and literature in primary and secondary education is to provide learners with the means of communication with the world at large. The emphasis is therefore on practical skills and communication. The criteria for materials, methods and activities, their selection, grading and presentation, follow from these aims. The English curriculum for schools states:

> Communication in this context means the ability to understand and speak to English-speakers, and to read journals, professional literature, belles lettres and text books in English. Thus, a high level of English proficiency is required of the pupil.

This curriculum has recently been modified to classify the components of 'communicative competence' as 'linguistic competence' with notions of accuracy of control of the language system,'pragmatic competence' with notions of fluency in the use of the language and 'sociolinguistic competence' with notions of appropriacy of situation in which the language is used.

Within this the teacher has the opportunity to select materials for speech, listening comprehension and extensive reading activities while following the approved text book for intensive reading and overall teaching. This means the teacher has to be aware of the cultural interests of learners in order to present English in communicative use and to know the structure of English well enough to draw comparisons with Hebrew or Arabic and develop an understanding of what language is and how it works. This knowledge, especially in Israel, with its diverse, English-speaking immigrant community, traditional orientation toward British English and growing influence of American English, has to include an awareness of language variation.

English within the school system is set out in the Ministry of Education and Culture's Outline of the Israeli School System 1986 (see section 14). At primary level (grades 4, 5 and 6) language items are presented aurally-orally first and after this students practise with written text. The emphasis is on the sound system (pronunciation, intonation etc.) but that system is integrated with grammar and vocabulary (some fifty basic structures and an active vocabulary of 600 words).

At the intermediate or middle school level (grades 7-9) there is a consolidation of primary level learning and enlargement of the working vocabulary to some 1,500. A further fifty structures, set out in the syllabus, are learnt more for active use by 'A' group learners and more for passive recognition by 'B' group learners.

At upper secondary level (grades 10-12) there is increasing emphasis on reading comprehension, with an inevitable preparation for the Bagrut, the matriculation examination. In the syllabus set out by the Ministry of Education and Culture learners are expected to complete learning English with a vocabulary of some 3000 and active use of over 100 working grammatical structures.

There have been attempts recently to develop examinations to control and inform entrance to and from the middle school level but these are still regional initiatives. The Bagrut matriculation examinations taken at the end of twelfth grade in all subjects provide the principal public examination for English.

The five-point Bagrut examination has sections for reading comprehension, listening comprehension, language exercises, oral expression and essay writing. There is a six-point examination for native or near-native speakers where the school chooses an advanced literature reading programme for candidates to be examined in; this is the main examination for university entrance.

The four-point Bagrut examination is similar to the five-point but in addition there is an internal English for Specific Purposes (ESP) component for candidates from technical or agricultural schools.

The three-point Bagrut has similar but much easier components. It has limited acceptance as matriculation in adult education but is not acceptable for university entrance: it is likely to be withdrawn in the near future.

The Gemer school-leaving examination is at a much lower level and is not part of the Bagrut. It includes simple reading comprehension and language exercises; it is used as a qualifying examination for lower-level vocation programmes.

The definition and development of syllabus and examinations are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture, as is the approval of text books. The Chief Inspector of English together with a network of regional inspectors supervises this process, advised on policy by the Pedagogical Division of the Ministry and an English Committee drawn from professionals in the field. The inspectorate is also responsible for in-service training and for the placing of teachers in schools.

Success in English is a requirement for university admission and for entrance to various professions. Success is formally reported by Bagrut results, which are combined for university admission with scores achieved on the National Psychometric Test prepared by the National Institute of Testing and Evaluation in Jerusalem. This battery of tests is modelled on university admissions tests developed in the United States by Educational Testing Service, Princeton. Statistics for secondary school leavers' success in English are set out in the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics' Statistical Abstract no. 37, 1986. While it is obviously dangerous to talk of the 'average school leaver' in terms of ability levels, it is reasonable to assume that functional competence has been achieved in English equivalent to band 4 and above of the British Council and University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate's English Language Testing Service (ELTS).

In tertiary education, all universities and Everyman's University English Department offer English as a main subject. Everyman's is the equivalent of the Open University. The courses combine the study of literature and linguistics, and teaching is supported by a high level of research study;

nearly all academic staff are native speakers, often with advanced degrees from the United States or Britain.

Students at all other faculties and departments must follow compulsory English language courses unless exempted by either Bagrut Psychometric results or internal university assessments. These in-service courses emphasize reading comprehension because the very extensive bibliographies and set texts for each subject are mainly in English. It therefore follows that reading competence in English is essential at postgraduate level. These programmes are run by often large English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Departments within each university. These are mainly teaching departments involved in some research, and can number over fifty teachers.

Three universities, Tel Aviv, The Hebrew and Haifa, have English medium overseas programmes, while the Weizmann Institute of Science, the leading postgraduate science research institute, is also English medium.

ESP is taught at both secondary and tertiary levels. In the technical, agricultural and vocational secondary schools, however, ESP programmes are provided for learners in the last two years but only for those who have problems with selected specific reading texts. The General Federation of Labour, the Histadrut, administers some 121 vocational training schools and the ORT (Organization of Rehabilitation through Training) World Union also have a network of such schools. The latter organization is also known as the ORT World Union of Societies for the Promotion of Handicrafts and Industrial and Agricultural Work among Jews. Both organizations are taking an increasing interest in the definition and teaching of 'Technical English'. At tertiary level the various colleges of technology and technical high schools have more varied ESP programmes but again with an emphasis on reading texts. ESP teaching is, however, still in its early stages and has yet to obtain adequate resources for the development of syllabus, materials, methods and teacher-training (either pre- or in-service). An ESP association for both secondary and tertiary level teachers has just been set up by a group of teachers to try to remedy the situation and is concerned to improve teaching in this field.

English teaching forms part of the programmes of the various organizations concerned with adult education. The Ministry of Education offers courses for adults who did not complete middle or secondary education and these courses can lead to a three-point Bagrut or a Gemer examination. Each municipality offers low-level courses through their community or so-called 'popular universities' and most universities offer extra-mural courses through either a small department, as at Tel Aviv, or a large school of continuing education, as at Ben Gurion. Everyman's University offers a varied programme of courses with clear and monitored objectives.

The use of media, broadcasting and correspondence courses is well developed in two levels of English teaching: at school and at Everyman's University. Through the Instructional Television Centre a wide range of programmes and supporting text materials is integrated with the formal programmes at primary, middle and secondary levels. Everyman's University also makes effective use of TV broadcasts.

The English Teachers' Association of Israel (ETAI) which is affiliated to the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) draws its members from primary, middle and secondary levels. It is recognized by and works with the Ministry of Education and Culture and has a very full programme of teacher education activities at branch level (there are some fifteen branches). It also runs two national conferences a year attracting over 500 teachers to each and in 1985 successfully launched an international conference in Jerusalem which will be repeated every three years.

The University Teachers of English Language in Israel (UTELI) draws its members from the service EFL departments at all institutions of tertiary education. Through its annual conference and round table discussion it encourages collaboration on research and teaching betwen the various departments.

The Israeli Association of Applied Linguistics (ILASH) draws its members from a variety of university departments whose academic staff have research interests in, or bordering on, applied linguistics. The association has a successful annual conference where the standard of papers is usually high.

The Israeli branch of International TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), ISRATESOL, is a very small association which has occasional meetings.

3 Teachers of English

Most teacher-training colleges now have departments for training teachers of English for primary and middle schools, and recently some have either been incorporated within the local university (Oranim College and Haifa University) or been accorded academic status to offer BEd. programmes to certify teachers up to grade 10 (as at Bet Berl College). Each university has a school of education, with an English department offering postgraduate certificates of education qualifying teachers to grade 10, when their BA is jointly in English and another subject, and to grade 12 when their BA is in English alone.

General subject teachers in primary schools may also qualify as English teachers on passing external English proficiency examinations and extra methodology courses. New immigrant teachers can also undertake special courses (depending on their qualifications and whether they are English native speakers) which on completion give certification to teach at the appropriate level of the state school. There is a committee, set up by the Ministry of Education and Culture, which assesses new immigrant teachers and advises them on which type of course they should take.

Pre-service teacher education is very effectively organized by the colleges, universities and the Ministry, with experienced and well-qualified training staffs, mostly immigrants from English-speaking countries. The supply of teachers meets demand except for schools in outlying regions in the south and north. It is difficult to forecast whether this situation will remain, given the recent reductions in resources for education and teachers' dissatisfaction with salaries and conditions. An increasing number of graduates from training colleges find jobs and careers outside teaching in the business sector, where advanced English language proficiency is well rewarded. Women teachers form over ninety per cent of the profession, and immigrants from English-speaking countries tend to be the most active in professional development.

In-service teacher-training is mainly provided by the regional inspectorate of the Ministry of Education and Culture, with their teams of teacher-counsellors advising individual teachers and also setting up training days throughout the year. Increasingly, however, teachers are organizing their own training through branches of the ETAI. Teacher-training colleges are now becoming regional centres for in-service training both to their own graduates and, through running evening courses on all aspects of English Language Teaching (ELT), for their local teachers. Instructional Television also provides training days to introduce the programmes and materials that it has developed.

The British Council is closely involved at all levels in both pre- and in-service training, providing support and guidance to institutions, associations and individuals. There is an extensive programme of sending teachers to Britain for long or short courses and visits and bringing British specialists to advise and consult over the whole range of English teaching.

The main teachers' professional body is the ETAI (see section 2) which has plans to expand the services it offers teachers in support of their development. It may be that if the resources allocated by the state to teacher education are reduced this association and its activities will become more central to in-service training. It has grown and developed very much in recent years.

A new professional association of teacher-trainers called Contact has been set up. It draws over 100 members mainly from colleges and universities, although the Ministry's inspectors and teacher-counsellors are also well represented. It has held a series of meetings and seminars, initially to set up systems to exchange information on principles and practice. These have resulted in designated groups reviewing components of BEd. and PGCE. courses and how these are presented in each college or university. The association hopes to review such issues as links between pre- and in-service training and generation gaps between teachers in school. As with the ETAI, Contact plans to influence decisions on English teaching and training policy through its National Committee.

4 Materials support

A variety of teaching materials and course books, all of which have been approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture (a compulsory requirement), accompany the national syllabus and the systematically graded courses that derive from it. This material forms the central and intensive part of teaching and learning in all schools but other additional material can be used at the discretion of teachers as a supplement, particularly for extensive reading or communicative activities. Most primary and middle/intermediate schools follow English by Television courses, developed by Instructional Television, which integrates regular broadcasts with accompanying course books. English for Speakers of Hebrew (ESH) is the other main course which provides course books from grade 4 to the Bagrut examination. ESH was prepared by Tel Aviv University and sponsored by the Curriculum Development Centre of the Ministry.

Increasingly, practising teachers and a few full-time local writers are producing course books, which, after approval by the Ministry, are published by local publishers. This material can be more flexible and up to date and is to an extent taking over from the large-scale courses of the past such as ESH. Everyman's University produce secondary level programmes of television broadcasts, audio cassettes and course books, primarily intended for adult self-study correspondence courses, which are also used in secondary schools, especially in remedial classes. The main English language newspaper and another publisher also produce special newspapers, for all levels of schools, called Hey There and Student Post, which cover current affairs at appropriate age and language levels.

All the above material is widely available through general and specialized bookshops and very effective mail-order distributors. There is a developing connection between local teacher-writers and local publishers which is improving the standard of piloting, editing, production and distribution.

All sources of material try to offer guidance to teachers on the classroom use of their material through demonstrations and training days. For one book this might mean a road show consisting of short demonstrations; for a course of books and other materials this means a planned series of seminars and workshops. Most of the material reflects current approaches to teaching and learning in Israel, where a core programme of teaching grammatical structures and vocabulary is presented through communicative methods. In addition, classrooms are becoming, within the constraints of size and time, more adaptable to learner-centred approaches. There are Ministry Pedagogical Centres in each of the regions, which maintain libraries and resource centres of varying size for English teachers. A number of schools, particularly in the kibbutz sector, have developed learning and resource centres where teachers work together with learners to produce a wide variety of material for classroom use and self-directed and access learning.

Materials and course books produced outside Israel are not approved for use in the classroom by the Ministry; this is because they are not sufficiently neutral in their cultural contexts and do not take account of mother-tongue interference and other contrastive features. Inevitably, such material, which is available from all bookshops and distributors, is used widely by teachers as a source of ideas for classroom activities. British material is particularly popular. Certain dictionaries designed for foreign learners, such as Hornby and Collins, are used regularly with approval in the upper grades.

Despite the wide use of television broadcasts there is much less use of video material due to equipment and storage problems; copyright restrictions and the initial cost also limit this use. Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) material, however, is beginning to become an industry, with a number of university or privately based courseware producers. More and more schools, assisted by government, charitable foundation or kibbutz investment grants, are acquiring micro-computer laboratories, which can be used for all subjects including English. Most current courseware is somewhat predictable and based on text and multiple-choice format but there are signs of innovatory approaches. Better access to British-produced material should give impetus to this development.

5 Educational administration in relation to English teaching

The Ministry of Education and Culture has a typical hierarchical structure similar to British and West European ministries. The minister is a senior politician from whichever political party or coalition forms the government of the day. The senior civil servant is the Director-General who is assisted by Assistant Directors General. The key tiers for English teaching are the Pedagogical Division and the Chief Inspectorate, with Chief Inspectors for each subject.

The Chief Inspector for English has a cadre of Inspectors for English within the regional inspectorates and for the Arab sector; these inspectors also report to their regional education supervisors. Each regional inspector has a number of teachers who act as part-time counsellors. The English inspectorate is responsible for ensuring that national educational policy, as formulated in the Pedagogical Division, is implemented in schools, while taking account of regional differences and requirements. To this end they can place or replace teachers in schools, provide in-service training with incremental credits, advise school heads and general inspectors on the English programme in their schools and initiate and manage experiments on special projects.

The Chief Inspector of English is advised on professional aspects of educational policy by the English Committee, chaired by a senior academic and public figure and composed of university, college and teaching staff to represent a reasonable cross-section of all those involved in English teaching. The Chief Inspector edits the English Teachers' Journal (ETJ) Israel, which is published twice annually and which gives direction to, and provides a forum for discussion on professional issues.

Universities and training colleges are autonomous with regard to academic policy, organization and admissions, although tertiary education is,of course, funded, apart from charitable grants and foundations, from the public purse. Their hierarchy of faculties, departments and research units, with their various appointments and requirements for tenure and promotion, are very much on the Western model.

6 Development and planning of the teaching of English

Prior to 1948 the educational system was heavily influenced by the British Mandate, which had a formative effect on the teaching of English. From 1917 to 1948 English was the first official language before Hebrew and Arabic, and the first foreign language in schools in Jewish settlements. During the latter period of the Mandate opposition to teaching and learning in English increased,although this was mitigated by Britain's role in the Second World War. With the founding of the State of Israel, Hebrew became the national language, with an accompanying decline in English for everyday use. Use of English was not proscribed (for example, the official gazette of the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, as well as its enactments, continued to be published in English) and it was still the first foreign language in schools. After the 1967 war the use of English revived with immigration from Western countries, especially from the United States, and an economic expansion which opened Israel to Western consumerism and tourism. The growing political and economic ties between the United States and Israel at governmental level and between American Jewry and Israelis reinforced this growth in the use of English and its position within the education system.

Aspects of these historical influences and trends have carried through until the present day in shaping the development and planning of English teaching. English is taught within and without the educational system as the principal means of international communication, and is seen by all concerned as the key to advancement in the professions. As this situation is likely to continue, English teaching is organized so as to meet these twin aims.

Within this context variation of objectives is developed by the divisions and departments of the Ministry of Education and Culture reacting formally or informally to the pressure groups or interested parties of a free and open democracy. Thus university-based research groups such as the Academic Committee for Research on Language Testing (ACROLT) or university-based institutes such as the National Institute of Testing and Evaluation (NITE) publish reports and publicly discuss standards of language proficiency required at both secondary and tertiary levels. Newspapers debate the quality of teaching material and coursebooks and give various lobbyists access to such debates, including parents and pupils. Municipalities question and commission research into the reading abilities of a particular age group in the schools in their areas. Teachers themselves,whether collectively within their trade unions, through professional associations or individually raise questions of policy and practice. Research findings and the development of teaching approaches in applied linguistics and English teaching in Britain or the

United States, of which the whole profession in Israel is very aware, either directly through journals and institutional contacts or through agencies such as the British Council, also inform policy and planning.

Depending on circumstances, any of the above inputs to or influences on the development of English teaching can have an impact at any level of the structures outlined in section 5. Israel is a small country and its English-teaching profession a very communicative one. Thus in those instances where policy, development and planning are top down, as with themes for school years such as 'democracy', there can be quick and effective debate over its implementation in English teaching. When there is reaction bottom up to an innovation such as the new oral examination in the Bagrut, the system is sensitive enough to modify and/or provide retraining fairly rapidly through the national English Committee and the regional and national inspectorates. Regular developments in the school system are presented in the Ministry Director-General's Newsletters and in the English Teachers' Journals; the Inspectorate hold monthly meetings and an annual summer school to exchange information and for an update on issues and problems. Universities and training colleges have the usual faculty and departmental meetings. Larger schools have English departments with heads and liaison with regional teacher-counsellors.

7 English outside the education system

Private or commercial teaching of English is usually carried out by private teachers and tuition; they are sometimes loosely grouped into networks of private teachers which exist for a year or so before splitting up. This situation is sustained by the large number of English-speaking immigrants, with or without Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) qualifications or experience, who live in both large cities and rural communities. Widespread private tuition and the provision of classes for adults by universities and municipalities (see section 2) means there are limited marketing opportunities for commercial language schools. Only one school, the American Ulpan, which has branches in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, has lasted more than two to three years. Some two or three schools (e.g. the English Studio, the English Educational Centre) have opened recently and it remains to be seen to what extent they become established.

Teaching ESP in the private sector is more organized; a large group of teachers service the banking sector, and a general business training group affiliated to the international TACK training organization offer ESP courses to industry. (The organization takes its name from its founder members George and Alfred Tack.) The aircraft industry has also developed a group of private teachers to provide ESP teaching. Economic constraints on Israeli companies are resulting in most ESP teaching being carried out by private teachers on an ad hoc basis. There are also two English-medium private schools in Tel Aviv, one in Haifa and one in Jerusalem serving the American and international communities.

A significant recent development has been the growth of private teaching for pre- or early school age children. This is developing quite rapidly, with fewer individual teachers and more panels or groups of teachers managed by educational entrepreneurs. It is anticipated that as the public perception of the importance of English increases and the provision of English in state schools decreases this kind of commercial teaching will expand.

8 British support for the teaching of English

The availability of English-speaking immigrant teachers, who account for up to forty per cent of the profession, and other reasons, mean that there are no British Council teachers employed or sponsored by the British Council other than in the Language Centre in Tel Aviv. This Centre opened in 1985, currently teaches 850 students and has eighteen teaching staff, all of whom are locally recruited and are mostly British immigrants. There are plans to increase the Centre's programmes so as to teach a larger number of students and subsequently to open another centre, in Jerusalem, with a target student body of 500. The Centre has already run a pilot teacher-training course and intends to develop this activity as well as classes leading to the First Certificate and Proficiency examinations administered by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES).

The British Council's English Language Officer (ELO), as well as directing the activity of the Language Centre, manages a programme of consultancy and support in every aspect of English teaching, from university-based research to teacher-training courses and classroom materials demonstration. Each institution, organization and association has an annual programme of activity and the British Council provides support to all the major seminars and conferences by bringing out specialists from Britain and/or for the ELO to lecture and lead workshops. The ELO is an ex-officio member of the national executives of ETAI and Contact and is invited to sit in on and contribute to the regular meetings of UTELI, the Inspectorate, the English Committee and ACROLT.

Recent major professional events include the first international conference of ETAI entitled 'Language Testing' in 1985, the 'Twenty-five years of Acrolt' seminar and the Contact workshops in 1986.

9 American support for the teaching of English

There is no formal or official support from American government agencies. However, American influence is pervasive in tertiary education owing to the large numbers of American immigrants dominating the upper reaches of the academic profession. As a consequence there is much private academic exchange between Israel and the United States, with American Jewish scholars spending sabbaticals in Israeli universities and vice versa. This also means that much of the research and research methodology is oriented towards the United States. On the other hand there is great acceptance of British theory and practice and, mainly through the British Council, interchange with the British scene, particularly in the school system, where British experience and approaches are very relevant.

10 Other agency support

There is little other agency support either directly or as part of aid work in English teaching.

11 Commercial opportunities

The sale of English teaching materials and equipment is in the very capable hands of the various local agents, who ensure, within the limitations of Ministry of Education and Culture approval, effective promotion and marketing. Together with the British Council they provide visiting representatives with information and advice on opportunities; British materials are very popular but the market is relatively small; BBC Acorn microcomputers have just been accepted by the Ministry and put on the approved list for schools, and it remains to be seen to what extent their hardware or software is actually taken up.

Despite the imposition of travel taxes and surcharges there is a regular, if small, uptake of courses in the Association of Recognized English Language Schools (ARELS) in Britain, mainly by teenagers and young people. The British Council provides information and some schools have linked with local travel agents to try to develop the market more specifically. Courses for teacher-training offered by British private institutions or charitable foundations have been taken up, usually individually, although two group courses, one in Britain and one in Israel, have recently been run, with British Council support.

British examinations are administered in very limited numbers; the British Council's new English Language Centre may develop this but numbers are not expected to increase dramatically.

12 Creative writing

See English Literature Profile on Israel for more information.

13 Current research

Israeli universities have a relatively large number of scholars capable of significant research into English language and literature and their teaching and study. All universities offer MA and PhD degrees in this field, with perhaps the MA TESL programme at Tel Aviv University being the most developed in linking research to classroom application. Each university has scholars undertaking and publishing research studies in journals and books; examples are: Andrew Cohen, Edward Levenston and Shoshana Blum-Kulka at the Hebrew University; Elite Ostein, Elane Shohamy and Ruth Berman at Tel Aviv University; Bernard Spolsky and Joel Walters at Bar Uan University; Donald Sim and Batia Laufer at Haifa University; Yishai Tobin at Ben Gurion University and Isabel Berman at the National Institute of Testing and Evaluation. Research covers the full range of areas in the field with a particular emphasis on speech acting theory, language constructs and discourse analysis, as well as learning theory and methods and syllabus and curriculum design. The Academic Committee for Research into Language Testing, chaired by Spolsky, Shohamy and Cohen, has succeeded in establshing an inter-university research group which has developed links with British and European language testing research groups and with the journal Language Testing edited by Arthur Hughes and Don Porter at Reading University.

Current research on English language in Israel is well covered in ETJ (Israel).

An outline of research into literature is reported in the Literature Profile on Israel.

In the past few years the British Council has offered six scholarships, four for MA study and two for PhD study in Britain, in applied linguistics and English. There have been some fifteen visitorships and ten specialist tourists in the same field.

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15 General Statement

The current position of English teaching is one of stability regarding syllabus, materials, methodology, examining and other such components of teaching and learning programmes at all levels. This, however, is not matched by the resources and budgets to sustain these programmes.

As tourism and trade with English-speaking countries increases it is expected that Israelis will make much more use of English. Even though the majority of students are now sabras (native-born Israelis) the standard of English as reported in average scores by the Bagrut and Psychometric examinations over the past seven years shows a slow but steady rise. English is seen as vital for career development and access to the culture and pastimes of the Western world. These needs are currently met by a competent and motivated teaching profession.

In 1985, however, some 150 million dollars was cut from the budget of the Ministry of Education and Culture, resulting in the loss of some 3,000 teaching posts across all subjects and the inevitable increase in workload and class size (up to forty pupils in primary, middle and secondary schools) for remaining teachers. Similar cuts in 1986 and 1987 show a deteriorating resource and budget situation which is leading to the kinds of compensatory developments noted in this profile: parental subsidy to neighbourhood

schools, networks of private classes for children, fewer English inspectors and counsellors, the growth of teachers' association branches and so forth.

At tertiary level, universities have severe budget problems which will lead to scrutiny of the viability of certain departments and possibly raise questions about the future of the large, service English departments. Student fees are increasing annually, leading to a certain amount of unrest at the beginning of each academic year.

As the education budget declines there may be trends to devolve more funding and control to the regions and their cities and municipalities. Private and parental initiatives may become increasingly common as a supplement to teaching in state schools. At universities, grants from charitable foundations and other agencies will become more and more essential to maintain research and other projects.